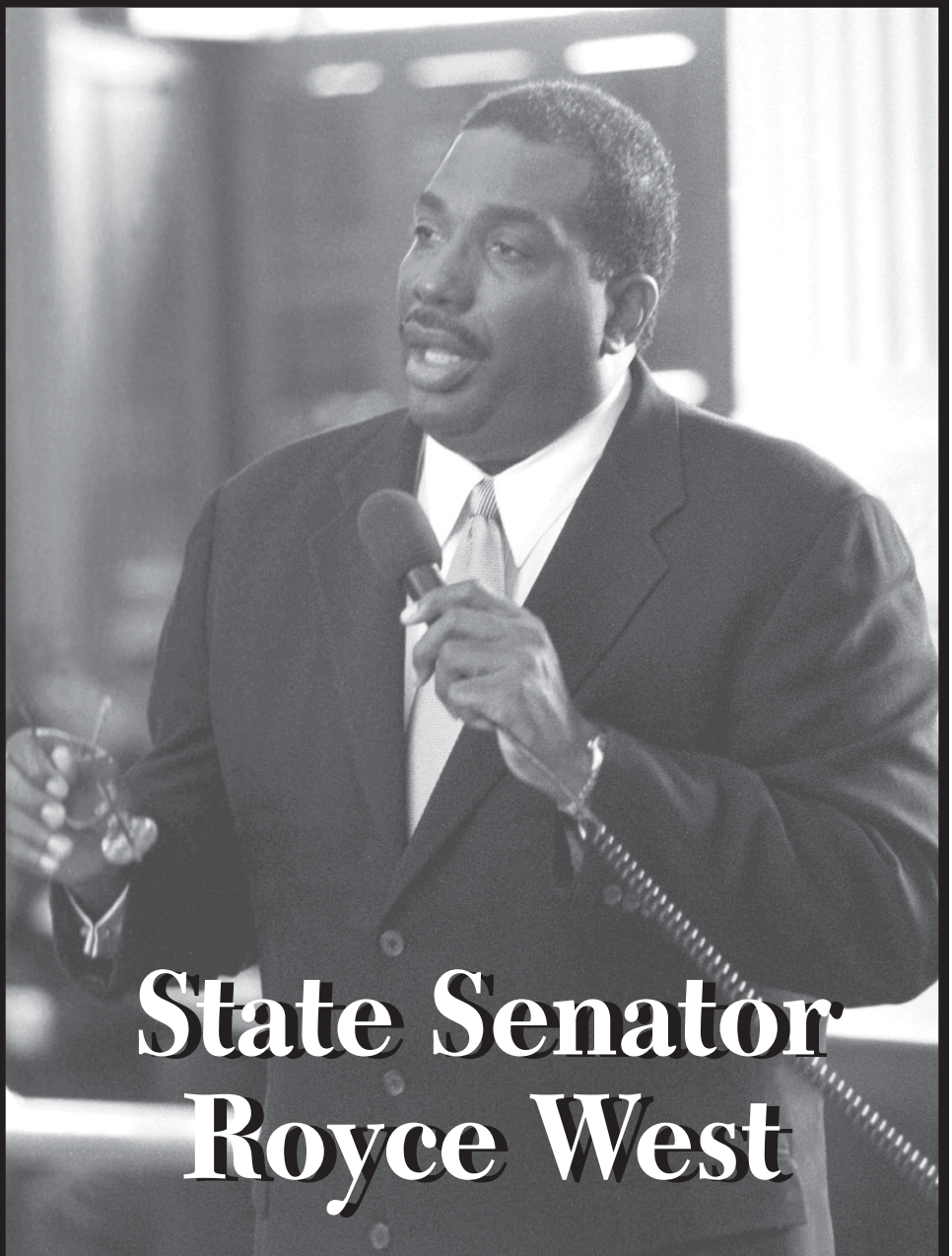




# The Capitol Report

An Update For Senate District 23



## State Senator Royce West



*Dear Friends:*

The 77th Legislative Session did not have the benefit of budget surpluses as past sessions have enjoyed. As a result, state funds were stretched to the maximum in order to provide basic services for our citizens, particularly the most needy. However, I am proud to report that many accomplishments were made for District 23. Most notably, with the passage of SB 576, The University of North Texas at Dallas will now become a reality. Residents will be guaranteed access to a public institution of higher education in the Southern sector of Dallas County due to the historic creation of this university. I am proud of the hard work it took by the entire Dallas delegation to secure passage of this bill, as well as secure the necessary funding to achieve this goal. In addition, in an effort to address the many health-related concerns of residents who live near Superfund Clean-up sites, I authored legislation to create the Texas Environmental Health Institute. This new entity is a collaborative effort between the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission and the Texas Department of Health to identify funds for research in this area. Also, I was successful in passing a comprehensive bill to prevent racial profiling. This new law will place video cameras in the patrol cars of law enforcement which will serve as a helpful tool in addressing this issue, as well as serve as an officer safety tool.

Finally, I am very proud to have passed legislation which will provide additional assistance to Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.

I encourage you to continue to share your thoughts with me and hope you will not hesitate to contact the Austin or Dallas office if I or my staff can be of assistance. On behalf of my wife Carol and our entire family, thank you for allowing me to continue representing you in Austin.

Sincerely,

Royce West

## Creation of the University of North Texas at Dallas Now a Reality



*On May 8, 2001, Texas Governor Rick Perry traveled to Dallas to the UNT System Center where he officially signed the bill into law.*

State Senator Royce West and University of North Texas System officials are ecstatic over the most recent efforts to bring a four-year, state-supported institution of higher learning to the City of Dallas and southern Dallas County. On November 14, 2001, the Dallas City Council unanimously approved the purchase of approximately 202 acres of land that will be the site for the planned University of North Texas at Dallas campus.

Following a year long search for sites along the southern Dallas, Interstate 20 corridor, the location near the intersection of Houston School Road and Camp Wisdom Road was chosen. Within view of the Dallas skyline, the location is just minutes away from the University of North Texas System Center at Dallas campus.

University of North Texas System Chancellor Dr. Alfred Hurley called the land acquisition, "a major step toward the goal that all of us have to create a four-year university as soon as we can."

Senator West agreed with Dr. Hurley that the choice is an excellent location due to its proximity to major highways.

"We had to make sure that it is located in a geographical area that makes it accessible to all the people that we will attempt to attract to the school," said Senator West. "This university will not only serve the City of Dallas, but it will serve Ellis County, Tarrant County (Fort Worth, Grand Prairie) and Denton County. It must also fit into the overall higher education infrastructure in North Central Texas."

During the 77th Session of the Texas Legislature, Senator West passed in the Texas Senate, legislation that created the University of North Texas at Dallas in statute. Backed by the entire Dallas delegation, State Rep. Jesse Jones successfully moved similar legislation through the Texas House of Representatives.

In January 2001, enrollment figures reached 575. By Fall 2001, all expectations were exceeded when

1,024 part-time and full-time students signed up for classes. According to guidelines established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, processes to gain university status will begin when enrollment reaches 2,500 full-time equivalent students. University officials anticipate that goal to be met by 2004 - 2005. The first graduates of the System Center received their degrees at UNT-Denton's graduation ceremony this December.

Senator West and project supporters say that not only will the university provide first-class, affordable, and accessible educational instruction, but should also stimulate economic growth in Dallas, Southern Dallas County and Northern Ellis County.

"This institution has the ability of having an economic impact of about \$1 billion a year within the region," the Senator added. "Our goal is to make sure it's an urban-based institution, but we're also looking at building business partners around the institution that will allow businesses to have access to the best and brightest that an education can provide."

UNT System officials estimate that the System Center is already generating \$10.5 million in annual economic activity in Dallas. That level of activity is expected to double by 2004.

The effort to build the university has the support of the entire region. In November, the cities of Cedar Hill, DeSoto, Duncanville and Lancaster pledged more than \$250,000 to the UNT System Center. Dr. Hurley says private donations totaling \$3.8 million have been raised in support of the university project.

Presently, the UNT System Center at Dallas offers 21 certificate and degree programs at the bachelors' and masters' levels. In 2001, the Texas Legislature appropriated \$6.45 million for its operation over the next two years.



*Former Texas Governor George W. Bush was the featured speaker at the ground breaking ceremony in September 1999.*





*Panel on Terrorism included Zach Thompson, Dallas Co. Health & Human Services, Bishop T.D. Jakes, Potter House, William Gross, City of Dallas Emergency Preparedness, and Senator Royce West.*

## Senator West Speaks Out Against Terrorism

State Senator Royce West was invited by the City of Dallas to participate in a multi-jurisdictional panel on emergency preparedness. The panel was the first in a series of planned city-sponsored Town Hall meetings addressing various topics of interest. It was called to calm concerns and provide information to Dallas area residents in the aftermath of the catastrophic events of September 11, 2001. That day, the world witnessed heinous acts of terrorism that saw the desecration of New York's World Trade Center and the ultimate indignity suffered in the attack on the Pentagon that resulted in the loss of thousands of lives.

The forum took place Wednesday, October 24, 2001, less than six weeks after the tragedy, and still fresh on the minds of millions of Americans. World-renown minister, Bishop T.D. Jakes opened the doors to the palatial Potter's House, located in Southwest Dallas, to an audience estimated at more than 1,800. FOX news personality Shaun Rabb served as facilitator for the 12-member panel comprised of national, state, and county representatives of emergency response, law enforcement, health organizations and other governmental entities.

Panelists informed the audience that Dallas is part of an emergency response network of 68 agencies that would have a role in the event of a disaster such as 9-11-01, or a public health threat. Dallas is

considered a possible terrorist threat due to the presence of an airport which serves as an international hub for air travel, it's vast technology-based industry, and because the city is home to professional sports teams where large crowds of people would convene in concentrated locations. However, Dallas is not considered a first-line target in that it does not have the density of population common to cities such as New York, Chicago and other eastern urban centers.

Senator West talked about the task force on Homeland Security appointed by Texas Governor Rick Perry. It would coordinate response efforts in the case of an emergency. The task force would work in conjunction with the federal Office of Homeland Security.

"The task force is designed to assure Texans that our state is working hard to ensure our safety by strengthening efforts to identify threats to our security before they materialize, and increasing our ability to respond effectively to emergencies," said Senator West.

State agencies such as the Department of Public Safety, the Texas Department of Health, the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission and the Texas Agriculture Department would all be involved. Texas also has an extensive Emergency Management plan in place.

## Helping Out Grandparents

In 1999, Senator West passed legislation authorizing the Texas Department of Human Service to provide supplemental financial assistance to grandparents who care for their grandchildren as a dependent. This session, Senator West expanded the criteria under which a grandparent may receive supplemental financial assistance by lowering the age of eligibility

from 50 years old to 45 years old and increasing the income eligibility level from 100 percent to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. "In order to help preserve families, many grandparents who are raising their grandchildren need and deserve assistance. I am more than proud to have passed this piece of legislation," stated Senator West.

## Texas Environmental Health Institute

Senator West established the Texas Environmental Health Institute in response to concerns from his constituents about the health effects of living near a superfund clean-up site. District 23 contains two such communities, West Dallas and the South Dallas community of Cadillac Heights, which are both facing government directed clean-ups due to industrial pollution and contamination. Senator West stated, "The Texas Environmental Health Institute will be a centralized entity, within the State of Texas, that can answer questions residents in these areas have about the effect of the environment on their health." Passed as a part of House Bill 2912, the Institute is a joint effort by the Texas Department of Health and the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. "The Institute will identify health conditions related to environmental contamination, work to prevent exposure to environmental toxins, educate and inform citizens about reducing exposure, and explore the short and long-term impacts of exposure," explained Senator West. Within the next year, the Institute will conduct a pilot project in District 23 to examine the West Dallas and Cadillac Heights communities. The details of the program are currently under development, but work within these neighborhoods should begin by March of 2002.



Senator West, along with members of his District 23 Student Advisory Committee and Dallas Firefighters held their annual blanket drive and collected over 200 new blankets and pillows. This year's collection of blankets have been sent to a homeless shelter in New York City located near "Ground Zero".

## Lending Practices

During the 77th Legislative Session, Senator West began an important effort to stop predatory or abusive lending practices in the home lending market. "Constituents came to me with stories of being ripped-off when it came to getting loans to buy or repair their homes," said Senator West. In addition to unfair interest rates and needless fees, Senator West also found some indication that the difference between who gets prime (bank rate) and sub-prime (higher than bank rate) loans may have less to do with credit and more to do with location. After lengthy negotiations with both lending and consumer lobbyists, Senator West wrote and passed Senate Bill 1581. Among other things, this bill

requires all borrowers receiving a loan with an interest rate over 12% to receive a disclosure statement advising them about the benefits of loan counseling. In order to provide consumers with information on this topic, Senator West has taped a series of 30-minute programs on a variety of financial

issues which will be played on cable access channels in the Dallas area and throughout the State of Texas, beginning in January of 2002. Look for these programs on Dallas cable on channels 27A, 11B, and 13B, and let Senator West know what you think! Give him a call at (214) 467-0123 with questions or feedback.

## Transportation Mobility Fund

Motorists in Texas scored a big victory in the November 6, 2001 election with the passage of Proposition 15 which created the Texas Mobility Fund.

Texas has long operated under a "pay-as-you-go" system of funding transportation where projects are built only when the appropriate funding is available. With the state's booming population and the constant demand for new roads and the expansion of existing traffic arteries, experts say that under the current system, Texas can only build about 36 percent of the highways needed to accommodate that growth.

The Texas Mobility Fund will allow transportation projects to be financed through bonds in the same way that colleges and universities already enjoy. The Mobility Fund will also allow revenue generated by toll roads to

pay for the costs associated with their construction. The old law only allowed federal and state financing. These dollars will now be available to meet other transportation needs.

## Frontage Roads

There is also a hot, statewide debate on whether Texas should continue to build frontage roads along it's highways in the future. State transportation officials say that frontage roads only add traffic to already congested highways. Cities say that frontage roads provide better options for shorter destinations and are a boon to economic development. There are also safety considerations when accidents occur and there are no alternative routes available on which to resume traffic flow. This issue will be decided over the next few months. Contact my office for information on upcoming public hearings.



## New Laws Touch Texans as of September 1st

Over 900 new laws which took effect on September 1st will touch the lives' of many Texans including driver's, students, business owners, and privacy seekers. These new laws include the following:



**Protecting Citizens' Privacy:** Marketers will be prohibited from using patients' medical records; the Department of Public Safety will no longer be allowed to sell personal data of drivers' license applicants to marketers; a statewide no-call list will protect Texans from intrusive telemarketers; and, sending harassing e-mails, faxes or pages is now a crime considered to be electronic stalking.



**Cleaning up the Environment:** Decades-old industrial plants will finally be required to comply with pollution-control restrictions dating from the early 70's; consumers who buy low-emission vehicles will be eligible for incentive payments; citizen complaints against pollution violators will be an easier process; and, the Center for Environmental Studies was established by Senator West in order to address the lead pollution in West Dallas.



**Safer Roads to Drive:** Young drivers and passengers will have new safeguards that include new seat belt requirements for children under age five; pickup drivers are prohibited from carrying children under the age of 18 in the truck bed; newly licensed drivers under age 18 have certain late-night driving restrictions.



**Improving Education:** Educators will encounter new laws requiring that charter schools meet higher standards; math teachers will receive more training; special education students will be given more careful attention; public schools will be prohibited from starting classes before August 21st beginning with the 2002-2003 school year.



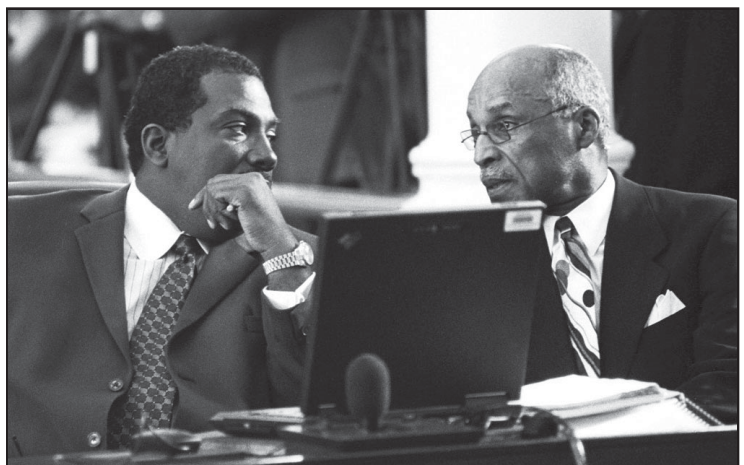
**Reducing Drinking & Driving:** These new laws include a redesigned vertical driver's license which will be issued to minors in an effort to reduce the sale of alcohol to youthful drivers; prohibiting open containers of alcoholic beverages inside moving vehicles; and, increasing the requirements for intoxication tests given to suspected drunken drivers.



**Stronger Penalties for Certain Crimes:** A new hate crimes law increases the penalties for most crimes committed because of hatred or bias against the victim; buying gas and driving off without paying will now have harsher consequences; penalties for cruelty to animals have been enhanced.

## James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Act

Three years have passed since our nation was shocked by the brutal murder of James Byrd, Jr. in Jasper, Texas. After countless attempts, the Texas Legislature finally passed the James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Act. This law toughens penalties for certain crimes proven in court to be motivated by hate and also provides prosecutors with a more effective tool to use in the courtroom. Since 1993, Senator West has been an outspoken voice in leading the charge to pass a hate crimes law in Texas.

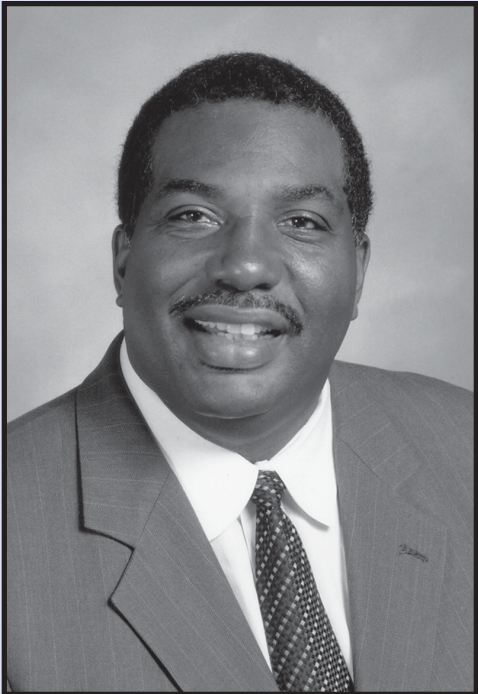


*On the day the Senate approved the Hate Crimes Bill, Senator West confers with Reverend Zan Holmes prior to the final vote. Reverend Holmes traveled to the Texas Capitol to emphasize to legislators the need to pass the James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Act following the hate-motivated desecration of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in May of 2001.*

# Senator Royce West

District 23  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, Texas 78711

PRSRT STD  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 2468  
Austin, Texas



## HOW TO CONTACT SENATOR ROYCE WEST

[royce.west@senate.state.tx.us](mailto:royce.west@senate.state.tx.us)



**DALLAS:**  
5787 South Hampton Road  
Suite 385  
Dallas, Texas 75232  
214/467-0123  
FAX: 214/467-0050

**AUSTIN:**  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, Texas 78711  
512/463-0123  
FAX: 512/463-0299  
TDD: 1-800-735-2989

THE TEXAS SENATE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER AND DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEX, RELIGION, AGE OR DISABILITY IN EMPLOYMENT OR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES.

## HELPFUL TOLL-FREE NUMBERS

Texas Performance Review Hotline .....	1-800-531-5441
Runaway Hotline .....	1-800-392-3352
Child Find /Missing Children .....	1-800-426-5678
Abuse Hotline (Children, Elderly, Disabled) .....	1-800-252-5400
Voter Registration, Elections Information .....	1-800-252-8683
Drug Abuse Hotline .....	1-800-662-4357
AIDS Hotline .....	1-800-299-2437
State Sales Tax Information .....	1-800-252-5555
Suicide Prevention /Crisis Intervention .....	1-800-643-1102
Governor’s Assistance Line .....	1-800-843-5789
Assistance for the Blind .....	1-800-252-5204
Child Support Enforcement .....	1-800-252-8014
Governor’s Crime Victim Clearinghouse .....	1-800-252-3423
Texas Crime Stoppers .....	1-800-252-8477